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POLLUTION FROM TOXIC CHEMICALS DECLINED IN 2001, EPA REPORTS

MISSOURI, ILLINOIS MADE STRIDES IN CURBING EMISSIONS

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Correction: Correction published July 03, 2003 - A chart in this story on the region's biggest polluters that referred to emission sources ranked the companies based on the Environmental Protection Agency's measure of their total chemical releases into the air, land and water.

Article Text:

The amount of toxic chemicals released into the U.S. environment declined 13 percent in 2001, with similar but smaller drops in Missouri and Illinois, the government's latest report says.

Hard-rock mining companies and coal-burning power plants repeated as the biggest polluters in the Environmental Protection Agency's Toxics Release Inventory. It includes information on more than 650 toxic chemicals, everything from copper to toluene to dioxin.

Some 6.16 billion pounds of various chemicals were released in 2001, down from 7.1

billion pounds a year earlier, the EPA said Monday.

Missouri ranked No. 16 among worst-polluting states in 2001, putting out 9.3 percent less than the year before. Illinois came in at No. 12, with 9.8 percent fewer pounds of pollution.

Nevada was the nation's leading polluter, contributing more than five times as much as Missouri or Illinois. Next were Utah, Arizona and Alaska. The least polluting state was Vermont.

The most pollution by chemical came from copper and zinc compounds; hydrochloric acid; and lead, manganese, arsenic, nitrate and barium compounds. Sixty-nine percent of the chemicals went into the land; 27 percent into the air; and 4 percent into the water.

"The good news is that overall pollution has declined," said Jeremiah Baumann, an environmental health specialist for U.S. Public Interest Research Group. "But the bad news is that for some of the most toxic chemical, we're seeing more, not less pollution."

The EPA said mining of hard-rock minerals such as gold, silver, copper and lead made up the biggest portion, 45 percent, of all chemical releases. The industry was responsible for nearly 2.8 billion pounds of toxic pollutants in 2001 - down from 3.4 billion pounds the year before.

Coal-burning electric generating plants were responsible for 17 percent of toxic pollutants in 2001. That was slightly more than 1 billion pounds, down from 1.2 billion pounds in 2000.

Industry spokesmen praised the latest figures.

"America's environment is steadily improving," said Jeffrey Marks of the National Association of Manufacturers. "Our air and water are much cleaner today than they were 30 years ago."

By county, the largest amount of chemical releases were in Utah's Salt Lake, Alaska's Northwest Arctic and Nevada's Elko.

In Missouri, the counties with the worst pollution were Reynolds County, ranked 24th in the nation; Iron County, at 27th; and Jefferson County, ranked 50th.

In Illinois, Cook County reported the worst pollution and was ranked 47th in the nation. Madison County, the only other Illinois county to make the worst 100 polluting counties, was 75th.

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Region's biggest polluters

Missouri's Top 10 emission sources

(in pounds)

1. Doe Run Co. Herculaneum smelter, Jefferson County; 15,450,405
2. Buick mine/mill, Boss, Iron County; 13,579,784
3. Brushy Creek mine/mill, Bunker, Reynolds County; 12,798,575
4. Fletcher mine/mill, Bunker, Reynolds County; 11,700,865
5. Doe Run Co. Glover smelter, Glover, Iron County; 9,437,014
6. Ameren Sioux power plant, West Alton, St. Charles County; 3,943,031
7. Doe Run Co. recycling facility, Boss, Iron County; 3,879,850
8. Sweetwater mine/mill, Ellington, Reynolds County; 3,858,406
9. Ameren Meramec power station, St. Louis; 3,702,791
10. Royal Oak Enterprises Inc., Ellsinore, Carter County; 2,714,976

Illinois Top 10 emission sources

(in pounds)

1. Peoria Disposal Co. #1, Peoria, Peoria County; 19,605,025
2. Keystone Steel & Wire Co., Peoria, Peoria County; 8,327,605
3. Big River Zinc Corp., Sauget, St. Clair County; 6,614,846
4. Granite City Steel, Madison County; 5,780,074
5. Ameren Energy power station, Coffeen, Montgomery County; 4,707,896
6. AES Edwards c/o Cilco, Bartonville, Peoria County; 3,607,260
7. Teepak LLC, Danville, Vermilion County; 3,519,600
8. Northwestern Steel & Wire Co., Sterling, Whiteside County; 3,490,635

9. Acme Steel Co., Riverdale, Cook County; 3,417,624

10. IBP Inc., Joslin, Rock Island County; 3,281,020

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

For more information, go to www.epa.gov/tri

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